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Encyclopedia

caricature
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car·i·ca·ture / ˈkarikəCHər; -,CHo͝or/

- n. a picture, description, or imitation of a person or thing in which certain striking characteristics are exaggerated in order to create a comic or grotesque effect.
    - the art or style of such exaggerated representation: *there are elements of caricature in the portrayal of the hero.* ■ a ludicrous or grotesque version of someone or something: *he looked like a caricature of his normal self.*
- v. [tr.] (usu. **be caricatured**) make or give a comically or grotesquely exaggerated representation of (someone or something).

DERIVATIVES:

car·i·ca·tur·al / ,karikəˈCHo͝orəl/ adj.

car·i·ca·tur·ist / -,CHo͝orist/ n.

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For the book of comics by Daniel Clowes, see Caricature (Daniel Clowes collection).

A **caricature** is either a portrait that exaggerates or distorts the essence of a person or thing to create an easily identifiable visual likeness, or in literature, a description of a person using exaggeration of some characteristics and oversimplification of others.[1]

Caricatures can be insulting or complimentary and can serve a political purpose or be drawn solely for entertainment. Caricatures of politicians are commonly used in editorial cartoons, while caricatures of movie stars are often found in entertainment magazines.

The term is derived from the Italian *caricare-* to charge or load. An early definition occurs in the English doctor Sir Thomas Browne's *Christian Morals* (first pub.1716).

> *Expose not thy self by four-footed manners unto monstrous draughts, and Caricatura representations.*

with the footnote —

> *When Men's faces are drawn with resemblance to some other Animals, the Italians call it, to be drawn in Caricatura*

A caricature of film comedian Charlie Chaplin.

Thus, the word "caricature" essentially means a "loaded portrait". According to caricature teacher Sam Viviano, the term refers only to depictions of real-life people, and not to cartoon fabrications of fictional characters, which do not possess objective sets of physiognomic features to draw upon for reference, or to anthropomorphic depictions of inanimate objects such as automobiles or coffee mugs. Legendary animator Walt Disney on the other hand, equated his animation to caricature, saying the hardest thing to do was find the caricature of an animal that worked best as a human-like character.

Contents

History

Some of the earliest caricatures are found in the works of Leonardo da Vinci, who actively sought people with deformities to use as models.

The point was to offer an impression of the original which was more striking than a portrait. Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598-1680), one of the great early practitioners, was favored by the members of the papal court for his ability to depict the essence of a person in 'three or four strokes.' In fact, the word "caricature" comes from the Italian *caricare,* "to load", thus the caricaturist's aim is to invest his image with as much meaning as possible.
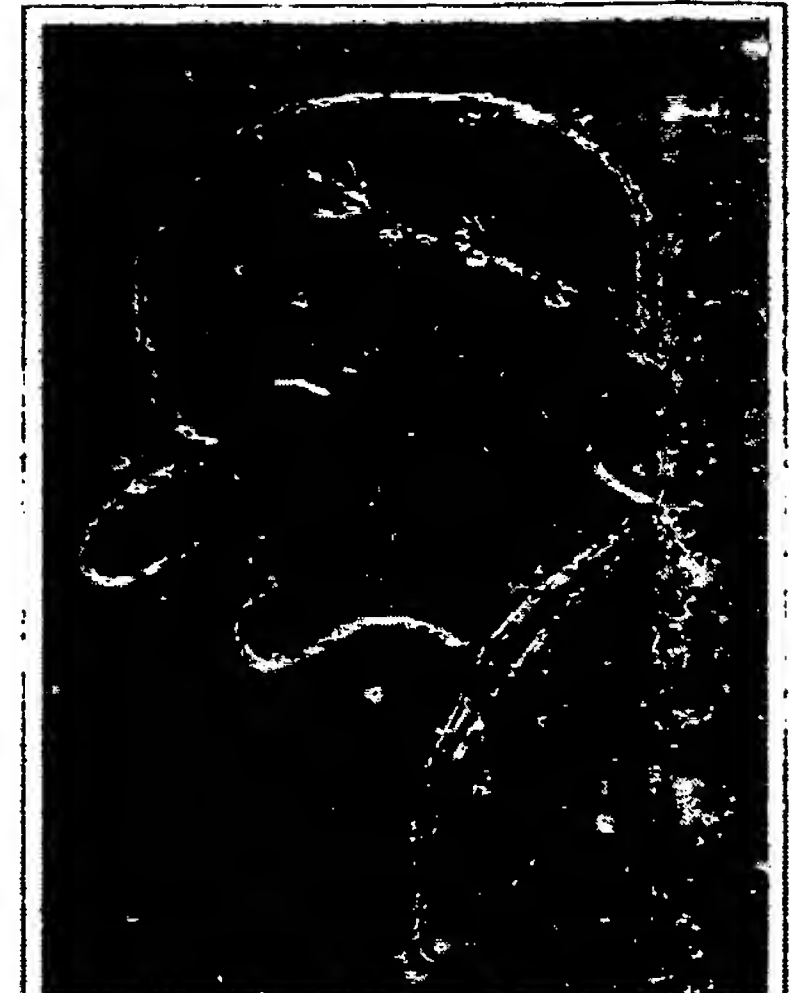
Caricature, therefore, experienced its first successes in the closed aristocratic circles of France and Italy, where the such portraits could be passed about for mutual enjoyment.

Ancient Pompeiian graffiti caricature of a politician.

Discomforts of an Epicure; self-portrait by Thomas Rowlandson from 1787 to prove that he could aim his caricatures at himself

The first book on caricature drawing to be published in England was Mary Darly's *A Book of Caricaturas* (c. 1762). The two greatest practitioners of the art of caricature in 18th-century Britain were Thomas Rowlandson(1756-1827) and James Gillray(1757-1815). Rowlandson was more of an artist and his work took its inspiration mostly from the public at large. Gillray was more concerned with the vicious visual satirisation of political life. They were, however, great friends and caroused together in the pubs of London. See the Tate Gallery's exhibit James Gillray: The Art of Caricature (http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/gillray/)

Nowadays, caricature artists are popular attractions at many places frequented by tourists, especially oceanfront boardwalks, where vacationers can have a humorous caricature sketched in a few minutes for a small fee. Caricature artists can be hired out for parties, where they will draw caricatures of the guests for their entertainment.

Notable caricaturists

See list of caricaturists.

George Cruikshank (1792-1878, British) created political prints that attacked the royal family and leading politicians (in 1820 he received a royal bribe of £100 for a pledge "*not to caricature His Majesty* (George III of the United Kingdom) *in any immoral situation.*" He went on to create social caricatures of British life for popular publications such as *The Comic Almanack* (1835-1853) and *Omnibus* (1842). He also earned fame as a book illustrator for Charles Dickens and many other authors.

Honoré Daumier (1808-1879, French) is considered by some to be the father of caricature. During his life, he created over 4,000 lithographs, most of them caricatures on political, social and everyday themes. They were published in the daily French newspapers (Le Charivari, La Caricature etc.)

Une discussion littéraire à la deuxième Galerie by Honoré Daumier Lithograph published in Le Charivari newspaper, February 27, 1864

Thomas Nast (1840-1902, American) was a famous caricaturist and editorial cartoonist in the 19th century and is considered by some to be the father of American political cartooning. He is often credited with creating the definitive caricatures of the Democratic Donkey, the Republican Elephant and Santa Claus.

A Group of Vultures Waiting for the Storm to "Blow Over"--"Let Us Prey." by Thomas Nast Wood engraving published in Harper's Weekly newspaper, September 23, 1871

Al Hirschfeld (1903 – 2003, American) was best known for his simple black and white renditions of celebrities and Broadway stars which utilized flowing contour lines over heavy rendering. He was also known for depicting a variety of other famous people, from politicians musicians, singers and even television stars like the cast of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. He has was even commissioned by the United States Postal Service to provide art for U.S. stamps. Permanent collections of Hirschfeld's work appear at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and he boasts a star on the St. Louis Walk of Fame.

Mort Drucker (1929 - , American) Drucker joined *Mad* magazine in 1957 and has become well known (and revered by some) for his parodies of movies and television shows. He manages to combine a comic strip style with consistent photographic likenesses of film and TV stars panel after panel. He has also contributed covers to *Time* magazine. He has been recognized for his work with the National Cartoonist Society Special Features Award for 1985, 1986, 1987, and 1988, and their Reuben Award for 1987.

Robert Risko (1946 – , American) is known for his retro airbrush style. His work has appeared in *Rolling Stone*, *Playboy*, *Vanity Fair*, *Esquire*, and *Interview*.

David Levine (1926 – , American) is noted for his caricatures in the *The New York Review of Books* and *Playboy* magazine.. His first cartoons appeared in 1963. Since then he has drawn hundreds of pen-and-ink caricatures of famous writers and politicians for the newspaper.

Sam Viviano (1953 – , American) has done much work for corporations and in advertising, having contributed to *Rolling Stone*, *Family Weekly*, *Reader's Digest*, *Consumer Reports*, and *Mad*, of which he is currently the art

director. Viviano's caricatures are known for their wide jaws, which Viviano has explained is a result of his incorporation of side views as well as front views into his distortions of the human face. He has also developed a reputation for his ability to do crowd scenes. Explaining his twice-yearly covers for *Institutional Investor* magazine, Viviano has said that his upper limit is sixty caricatures in nine days.

Sebastian Krüger (1963 – , German) is known for his grotesque, yet hyper-realistic distortions of the facial features of celebrities, which he renders primarily in acrylic paint, and for which he has won praise from *The Times*. He is well known for his lifelike depictions of The Rolling Stones, in particular, Keith Richards. Krüger has published three collections of his works, and has a yearly art calendar from Morpheus International. Krüger's art can be seen frequently in *Playboy* magazine and has also been featured in the likes of *Stern*, *L'Espresso*, *Penthouse*, and *Der Spiegel* and *USA Today*. He has recently been working on select motion picture projects.

Cover to *MAD* #223 (June 1980), Viviano's first cover work.
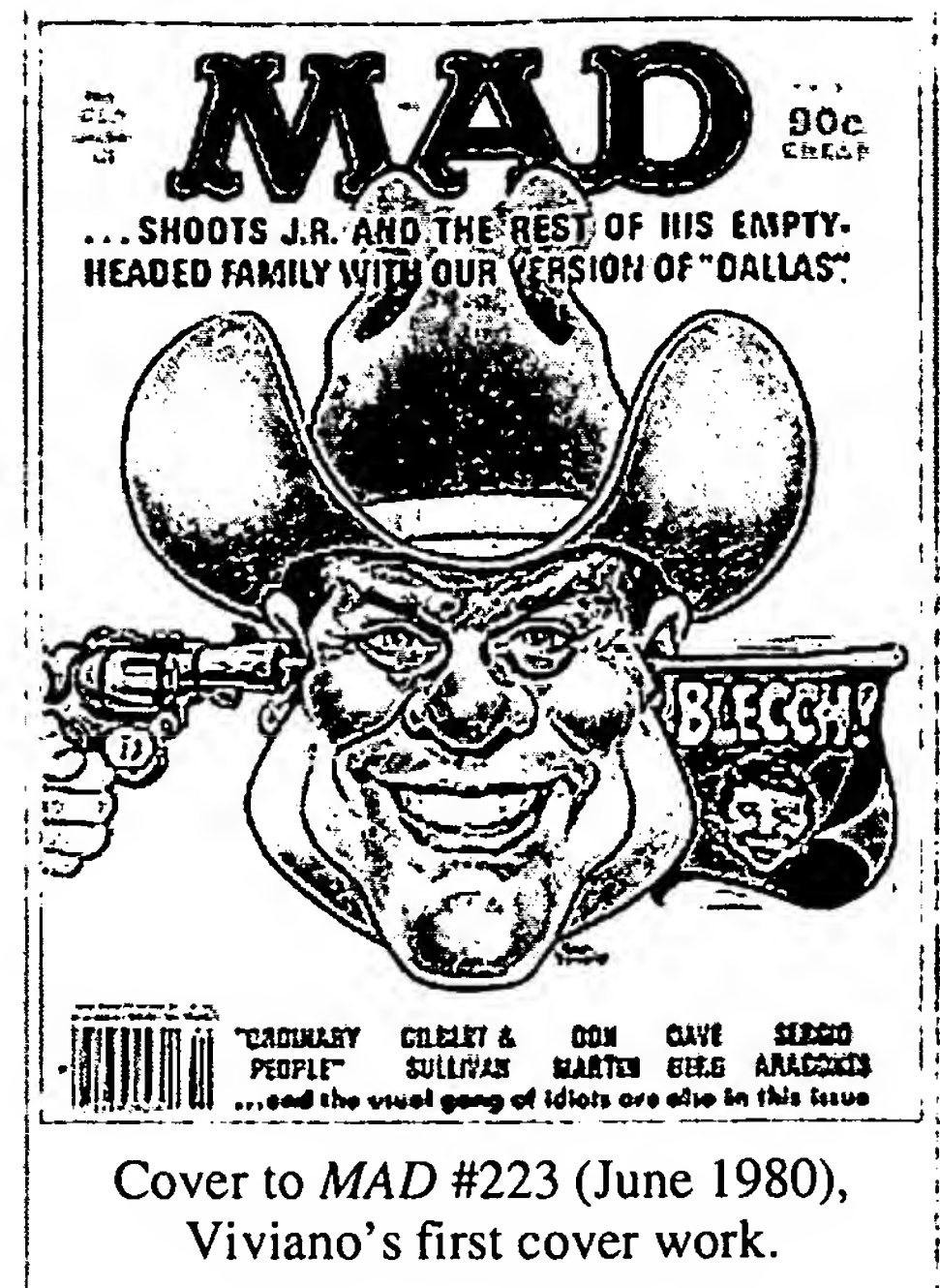
Hermann Mejia (Venezuelan) is known for his frequent work for *MAD Magazine*. Mejia uses multiple techniques for his work, sometimes rendering his illustrations in black & white ink and copious amounts of cross-hatching, sometimes using watercolor, and sometimes combinations of both

Jan Op De Beeck has published several books on caricature and was named "World's Best Caricaturist" in 2003 by a group of professional cartoonists in Iran.

Computerized caricature and formal definition of caricature

There have been efforts to produce caricatures automatically or semi-automatically using computer graphics techniques. For example,[2] provides warping tools specifically designed toward rapidly producing caricatures. There are very few software programs designed specifically for automatically creating caricatures.

An interesting aspect of some computer graphic systems is that by necessity they require quite different skillsets to caricatures created on paper. Thus using a computer in the digital production of caricatures requires advanced knowledge of the program's functionality. Rather than being a simpler method of caricature creation, it can be a more complex method of creating images that feature finer coloring textures than can be created using more traditional methods.

A milestone in formally defining caricature was Susan Brennan's master's thesis[3] in 1982. In her system, caricature was formalized as the process of exaggerating differences from a mean face. For example, if Prince Charles has more prominent ears than the average person, in his caricature the ears will be much larger than normal. Brennan's system implemented this idea in a partially automated fashion as follows: the operator was required to input a frontal drawing of the desired person having a standardized topology (the number and ordering of lines for every face). She obtained a corresponding drawing of an average male face. Then, the particular face was caricatured simply by subtracting from the particular face the corresponding point on the mean face (the origin being placed in the middle of the

face), scaling this difference by a factor larger than one, and adding the scaled difference back on to the mean face.

Though Brennan's formalization was introduced in the 1980s, it remains relevant in recent work. Mo et al.[4] refined the idea by noting that the population variance of the feature should be taken into account. For example, the distance between the eyes varies less than other features such as the size of the nose. Thus even a small variation in the eye spacing is unusual and should be exaggerated, whereas a correspondingly small change in the nose size relative to the mean would not be unusual enough to be worthy of exaggeration. Leopold et al.[5] found that individual face-recognizing neurons in the inferotemporal cortex respond more strongly to caricatured faces than to the veridical representations of the same face, and suggest that the visual brain may code faces relative to a prototypical face, consistent with Brennan's formalization.

Some, on the other hand, argue that caricature varies depending on the artist and cannot be captured in a single definition.[6] Their system uses machine learning techniques to automatically learn and mimic the style of a particular caricature artist, given training data in the form of a number of face photographs and the corresponding caricatures by that artist. The results produced by computer graphic systems are arguably not yet of the same quality as those produced by human artists. For example, most systems are restricted to exactly frontal poses, whereas many or even most manually produced caricatures (and face portraits in general) choose an off-center "three-quarters" view. Brennan's caricature drawings were frontal-pose line drawings. More recent systems can produce caricatures in a variety of styles, including direct geometric distortion of photographs.

In a lecture titled *The History and Art of Caricature* (Sept 2007 Queen Mary 2 Lecture theatre), the British caricaturist Ted Harrison said that the caricaturist can choose to either mock or wound the subject with an effective caricature. Drawing caricatures can simply be a form of entertainment and amusement - in which case gentle mockery is in order, or the art can be employed to make a serious social or political point. A caricaturist draws on (1) the natural characteristics of the subject (the big ears, long nose or whatever); (2) the acquired characteristics (stoop, scars, facial lines etc); and (3) the vanities (choice of hair style, spectacles, clothes, expressions and mannerisms).

The science of caricature

Ramachandran and Hirstein[7] suggested that caricature is related to peak shift. In the peak shift effect, animals sometimes respond more strongly to exaggerated versions of the training stimuli. For example, if a rat is trained to respond to a rectangle of a particular aspect ratio, and to avoid a square, when later presented with several rectangles it will prefer the one with the most elongated aspect ratio (this being the one that is most different from the square) rather than the original rectangle used in training. Ramachandran and Hirstein speculated that cells in a monkey brain that respond to particular faces would respond more strongly to caricatured versions of the face. This effect has been confirmed in FMRI experiments by Tsao.[7]

See also

- Cartoon
- Satire
- Physiognomy

- Zoomorphism
- Jyllands-Posten Muhammad cartoons controversy

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External links

- National Caricaturist Network (http://caricature.org/) Official site of the National Caricaturist Network- a non-profit association devoted to the art of caricature
- Argentine Caricaturist: Cao Luaces (http://www.trhon.com/cao/cao.htm)

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